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ABSTRACT

Sinclair Community College's (SCC's) Experience Based Education (EBE) program offers an alternative approach to learning which operates outside the time, format, and place constraints imposed by traditional, classroom-based education. After introductory material defining EBE and tracing the increased recognition of adult, lifelong learning activities and the growing demand for EBE at Sinclair, this monograph discusses SCC's cooperative education plan, under which students in individualized programs apply classroom learning to work situations. Factors crucial to the successful operation of the program are discussed, e.g., college/community cooperation, academic orientation, faculty participation, focus on specific learning outcomes, learning exercises beyond the work itself, curricular status, and SCC's three-option curricular plan. The next section describes SCC's Credit for Lifelong Learning Program and the steps involved in the development of a student portfolio which serves as the basis for determining credit. The Greater Dayton Consortium for Lifelong Learners is the subject of the next section of the report which describes the activities and objectives of the Consortium and its Educational Opportunity Center. The final section focuses on SCC's College Without Walls, in which students, through individual learning contracts, exercise the major responsibility for their lifelong learning activities. The monograph concludes with a discussion of EBE's impact on administration, faculty, and program development. (JP)

experiential learning

sinclair community college
dayton, ohio

An Introductory Note to
Experience Based Education at
Sinclair Community College

Alan Tough broke the news. Dozens of educational researchers replicated the findings. The eminently believable Opinion Research Corporation of America legitimized it all. Newspapers across the nation and respected educational journals communicated the revelation: America is a nation of lifelong learners.

Alan Tough's findings about adult learning (1978) came as a jolt to American educators. The data substantiated the claim, not taken nearly so seriously in Ivan Illich's Deschooling Society: "We have all learned most of what we know outside of school. Pupils do most of their learning without, and often despite, their teachers." (1970)

The familiar cry to communities and legislatures that institutionalized post-secondary education is the only potential for stimulating a nation of lifelong learners is a misrepresentation. Only individuals acting autonomously of institutions can choose learning as their way to be in the world. The Tough data substantiates that most Americans, regardless of race, sex, or socio-economic level, have made that choice.

The findings from Tough's in-depth, random interviews indicate the following learning patterns for a twelve-month period:

- 90% of all adults conduct at least one major learning activity a year
- the average learner conducts five distinct learning projects a year
- the average amount of time spent per learning project is 100 hours (i.e., the average learner spends 500 hours per year engaged in learning projects)
- 73% of all learning projects are self-guided
- only 17% of the learning is professionally guided (e.g., by proprietary schools, colleges, or company in-service programs)

Tough concludes that in this country there is a pervasive learning myth or stereotype which suggests that most learning is classroom-based and institutionally supervised.

The implications for post-secondary educators are especially significant. We have long harbored the notion that the adult populations we serve are not self-directed, that they need considerable external control, and that they need structure in order to succeed at learning and growing. The facts are that blue collar and lower-middle income families are learning at a rate similar to that of other socioeconomic levels. The content of their learning may be different, but learning - self-directed, independent learning - is something quite integral to life in this age.

The locations for learning are radically different than we had assumed. The circumstances are different. The methodology is different. The curriculum is different. The "students" are different. Most learning is simply not under our auspices. The curricula of the work place, the home, the family, and the church occupy considerably more of their time than the curriculum of the college.

The implications?

- We need to aggressively put in place mechanisms for assessing the self-directed learning projects that lifelong learners have initiated prior to entry into our programs
- We need to affirm adults as learners, recognizing their competence regardless of its source, with academic credit which appropriately relates to our degrees*
- We need to be open to the curriculum of the person, adapting flexibly, relying much less on excessively rigid curricula
- We need to be far less concerned with new programs and new courses and more concerned with new ways to learn
- We need to be less preoccupied with control and much more concerned with supporting and guiding students in learning pursuits
- We need to implement learning contract and other non-classroom, individualized learning strategies for linking students to community resources, beyond the walls of our campus, reinforcing their sense of self-direction and power as lifelong learners

*The Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL) is an excellent resource for developing this institutional competence.

What follows is a smorgasbord of responses to lifelong learners as evolved by the Experience Based Education staff of Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio. In the Appendix of this Guide is a discussion of institutional transformation which we hope will be of interest to planners of experiential learning programs.

These program concepts which you are about to read would never have been possible without the support of Sinclair teaching faculty and administrative personnel. But we want also to recognize the following special funding sources for their confidence in us: the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), which has funded our Greater Dayton Consortium for Lifelong Learning (2 years) and a special cooperative program for unemployed persons (1 year); Title I, through the Ohio Board of Regents, which helped us underwrite and pilot test our College Without Walls program (2 years); Title VIII, Cooperative Education funds, which allowed us to launch our decentralized cooperative program (3 years); the Department of Defense, which supported us as one of three sites nationally to conduct a demonstration prior learning assessment program, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, for enlisted personnel (1 year); and the Episcopal Church, which has provided a grant to underwrite tuition of College Without Walls minority student applicants.

Sinclair Community College
Experience Based Education Staff
Dr. Barry Heermann, Director

WHAT IS EXPERIENCE BASED EDUCATION?

An education which is less abstract, highly participatory, and experiential is of greater pertinence to the lives and learning styles of a significant number of students pursuing post-secondary educational study. This kind of education is here referred to as "experience based education" or "experiential education," despite some objections to these terms. As Lyons sees it, for example:

> The phrase "experiential learning" is redundant. Most of us would never say "wet water" or "physical sex," but we seem very comfortable discussing experiential learning, tacitly acknowledging that there is some other kind. There isn't. To understand or realize something new means that it becomes part of our own individual foundation; we have made it real. This is experience. This is learning. (1972, p. 21)

Although his points are well taken, these terms will be used in these pages to designate learning that differs from the traditional lecture mode and that usually happens outside the college. Keeton graphically establishes a rationale for experience based education while getting at the essential differences between traditional "book learning" and experiential learning.

> If learning to fly an airplane, for example, is done through simulation, a prospective pilot may learn more safely, more inexpensively, and with adequate effectiveness for at least the first times than at the controls in actual flight under the scrutiny of an experienced pilot. While simulation is not as faithful to the realities of flight as would be a trip up to 35,000 feet altitude with a Boeing 747, it is a kind of experience, and as such is far more likely to produce a competent pilot in short order than would a process of reading books about flying. Reading is also experience; but it is experience of reading, not of flying. The most effective experience in learning is an experience of what is to be learned or of some relatively faithful approximation of the essentials of the learning sought. (1976, p. 3)

Thus, in the broadest sense experience based education is action oriented and not exclusive of any location. While it can be classroom-based, emphasis will be placed on off-campus settings via cooperative education, internship, paid or nonpaid practicum,

community projects, field experiences that are part of on-campus courses, highly structured vocational cooperative education associated with technical programs, and volunteer service experiences. An additional component is learning from prior experiential learning. This variation has especially far-reaching educational implications, and an immense potential for influencing the traditional campus-centered educational structure. What all these possibilities have in common is off-campus experience, either before or after matriculation.

That learning does not always take place effectively in classrooms, despite endless sitting, listening, note-taking, and "parroting back" data, is well known. So it is ironic that for most colleges a movement to experiential learning smacks of the avant-garde. In reality, it is a return to what Martorana and Kuhns (1975) call "action learnings," to the very earliest foundation of education.

Quite simply, experience based education is the affirmation that learning can and does occur in a variety of experiential settings, with or without direct college supervision. Expanded experiential learning opportunities are vital because, as Morris Keeton has stated:

> Our present educational practices do not fulfill our needs: they inadequately represent our current understanding of . . . the ways in which knowledge and competence can be achieved, recognized, and certified. It has long been recognized that knowledge without experiential content is not truly knowledge. "Concepts without percepts are empty; percepts without concepts are blind," as Kant put it . . . Similarly, competence in action can only be reliably developed in action, real or simulated; and the greater the reliance upon simulation, the greater the likelihood that some critical and unexpected factor at play in reality may render the preparation inadequate. (1976, pp. 2-3)

Experience Based Education (EBE) at Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio, supports a broad range of experiential opportunities for students: 1) a cooperative education and internship program; 2) a credit for lifelong learning program, which flows from portfolio development, on campus and on site in local firms and agencies; and 3) College Without Walls (CWW), an external degree

program stressing self-direction through contract learning. Over 100 teaching faculty support over 4,000 individualized student interactions each year, involving direction and assessment of cooperative education experiences, portfolio development or assessment, or learning contract development and assessment in Sinclair's external degree program (CWW).

While EBE is very new to Sinclair (c. 1976), its rapid growth is a result of grass-roots support for certain programmatic and organizational uniqueness. EBE is not an appendage to the institution; it enjoys wide institutional support as an integral curricular and organizational component. The program is the domain of existing departments and faculty, who have full responsibility for credit and grade awards, thus avoiding "turf" issues. The EBE central office is partially underwritten by Title I, Title VIII, and FIPSE, and it employs 14 persons who serve in a "staff" capacity to traditional faculty and departments. It is a multi-dimensional program which includes experientially trained adults and younger students who are intent on doing non-classroom learning activities. EBE components serve as alternative learning strategies to traditional ones, although traditional credits and grades on traditional transcripts are awarded. Accordingly, Sinclair Community College students readily transfer to area universities.

The Experience Based Education department at Sinclair occupies an influential organizational position as a change agent. It demonstrates that valid and measurable learning can take place in locations other than the classroom; that experiential learning is important in moving students along a continuum from abstract study to practical application; that, in the ebb and flow of activity between classroom and work experience, the incoming tide of experience based knowledge can make important contributions to what is going on in the classroom. The key to success is not autocracy, nor even a veiled hegemony, but a <u>partnership</u> involving <u>all concerned parties</u>. A clearly defined reward system undergirds faculty participation, providing monetary as well as psychic income, thus allowing for a change of pace and the satisfaction of one-on-one relationships, often missed in a routine of traditional classroom teaching.

Traditional teaching faculty become involved as they volunteer for roles as:

- Co-op Faculty Coordinators who meld their expertise in their content area with their ability to assist students setting work/learning objectives for their co-op job experiences (approximately 40 faculty);
- Faculty Evaluators who award traditional course credit and grades, as appropriate, upon evaluation of prior learning described and documented in a portfolio (approximately 100 faculty); and
- CWW Faculty Mentors who represent existing departments in the negotiation, approval, and ultimate evaluation of learning contracts, supportive of existing course competencies (approximately 15 faculty)

The EBE central office is not an orphan child, operating in an amorphous capacity. It is firmly rooted in the academic division, and is responsible to the Vice President for Instruction. The roles of central office staff personnel are varied. Resource Faculty oversee and award credit for the process of portfolio development, as a unique learning experience in and of itself. In the College Without Walls program, Core Faculty work independently with students to assist in learning contract development, to assume their advocacy role with Faculty Mentors, and generally to provide a multi-dimensional support role aimed at successful student growth. EBE Co-op Facilitators develop and place students in field experiences in the community. But, again, the evaluation of learning is entirely a function of the teaching faculty; so the ongoing interface with EBE is assured because EBE Resource Faculty, CWW Core Faculty, and EBE Co-op Facilitators and their students touch base constantly with traditional faculty serving as Evaluators, CWW Mentors, or Co-op Faculty Coordinators in their own departments.

cooperative education

Practice and theoretical study should be like the blades of a pair of shears; neither blade is good for anything by itself but they cut by being in contact with each other. Conventional education has been like shears with only one blade—that of theoretical education.

Arthur Morgan, 1950

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION AT SINCLAIR

Since Sinclair Community College's Experience Based Education program is concerned with a very broad range of experiences, some definitions of categories are in order. Willingham neatly clarifies the major distinctions with which we will deal here:

> Experiential learning . . . refers to two types of learning. One is called variously learning through life experience, prior learning, or nonsponsored learning. It includes any type of creditable learning - through work, travel, volunteer service - that a student may have acquired independent of an educational institution and, typically, prior to matriculation. A second broad category of experiential learning, generally called sponsored learning, is that incorporated in institutionally sponsored programs that are designed to give students more direct experience in integrating and applying knowledge - especially off-campus internships, service activities, work programs, and the like. In both instances, it is important to understand that the learning or competence that is acquired must be relevant to student and institutional objectives. (1976, p. 225)

Thus, sponsored learning is an all-encompassing term for a variety of activities having different names on different campuses. (Prior learning will be taken up in a later section.) With this definition in mind, let us look at some forms of sponsored learning and some barriers to its adoption.

Although sponsored experiential learning exists in many colleges, in most cases it is only applied tactically in certain fields, usually occupational programs. The challenge of implementing it throughout the curriculum has seldom been met for several reasons.

A great deal of misinformation and skepticism about sponsored experiential learning limits its potential impact. Its popular form, "cooperative education," is perceived by some as "compromising education." The work component of this work-study alternation is seen at best as a kind of limbo which gives students a useful and financially rewarding diversion but which is intended primarily to sustain the really important task of education on campus. In some colleges, it is viewed more positively, yet even there it is considered an adjunct, a student service that contributes in important but ambiguous ways to student growth and maturity.

The record needs setting straight. Regardless of nomenclature, properly designed off-campus experiences offer the potential of stimulating learning of extremely high quality. It is learning that we are about, and sponsored experiential learning is an important alternative learning strategy, not a "things to do" student service or just a way of earning money.

In conclusion, then, we must not let legitimate concerns about structure and career relatedness restrict the widest possible application of experiential learning.

What Really Matters

Student learning is the crux of Sinclair Community College's Cooperative Education program. To bring it about, certain crucial factors must be attended to. These are described in the remainder of this section.

An Integral Role. Ideally, the college and its community are closely linked, each benefiting the other in myriad ways. The community uses the college to educate its citizens, and the college in turn should use the community to fulfill its mission. This reciprocity is well illustrated by Arthur Cohen in the following passage from his classic Dateline '79:

> The college's curriculum and instruction utilize many parts of the city; the community is used as a social laboratory. The core social science sequence employs students in jobs as data collectors, poll takers, field workers in a variety of public campaigns, and in similar capacities. Students do not remain on a campus to learn about society; they learn by participating in the community's activities, being involved in field projects, and attempting to manipulate small segments of the community in laboratory-type experiments. These experiences are not adjuncts to courses, they are forms of cooperative study that indicate the distinct conceptual break away from the campus as a closed community. (1969, pp. 6-7)

Sponsored experiential learning at Sinclair Community College plays a strategic role in building close ties between the college and its environment and, therefore, between students and their community. As said in an earlier work, "Cooperative education's contribution will be significantly limited should community college administrators see it 'tactically,' as just another interesting

innovation which perhaps our college can find some application for somewhere in some program" (Heermann, 1973, p. 15). Tactical application (e.g., in certain occupational programs) will greatly miss the contributions of experiential learning to the breadth of the community college student constituency. Opportunities for experiential learning are as crucial to the development of students as are opportunities for learning from classroom lectures - regardless of educational objectives.

An Academic Function. It is student learning, not student activity, which is the thrust of Sinclair's program. By being part of academic affairs, the cooperative programs became an integral element of the whole curriculum. The temptation to create a neat and tidy centralized department to deliver this experiential program was avoided. Instead certain support services, such as job development, public relations, and student advising, were housed in a central staff office, along with career placement, but the actual supervision of field learning was decentralized to division and department levels.

Faculty Participation. From the beginning it was believed that getting the faculty involved in off-campus as well as on-campus learning was tremendously important. Since teaching faculty are closely attuned to the abilities which the student's program aims to develop, they are best able to guide students in setting appropriate goals for field experiences. The faculty's involvement is adequately compensated with overload pay or reduced class loads. All efforts were directed to blurring the lines between managing classroom activities and supervising off-campus learning. Participation in the experiential learning program was voluntary, and the formula used to reimburse faculty members permitted them to oversee as few as one or two students, so that they could proceed slowly and gain experience. We felt a program which has a cross-section of teaching faculty members, each of whom works with a half-dozen students, is superior to a program in which a single non-teaching coordinator handles fifty to seventy-five students.

Faculty members were reassured that the primary role is to guide activities directly related to student learning. At the

beginning of each term, the faculty member is given a list of students to be supervised and their learning sites. The job development phase and all activities related to matching students to positions is handled by the central staff that assists all departments and divisions.

Focus on Specific Learning Outcomes. Each work assignment has specific, measurable aims (see Heermann, 1973, pp. 123-147). These may involve occupational skills, personal enrichment, career exploration, a strengthened self-concept, interpersonal effectiveness, or some other goals that are relevant to the broad development of the student.

The process of establishing these outcomes is undertaken by the faculty, the student, and the "employer." The faculty suggests particular abilities that can be developed through the experiential assignment and that can be specified in writing. But the final product incorporates the contributions of all three participants. The process itself is an important source of learning, as it requires introspection and a kind of interaction between teacher and student that is seldom present in the classroom. Since students are initially bewildered by the task, a student guidebook that describes how to set objectives is used. The process is also an excellent vehicle for integrating a variety of subject matters and for achieving a personalized and self-directed learning program.

Learning Exercises Beyond the Work Itself. There are a number of devices which allow the student to strengthen the learning experience. Several of the more important alternatives which may be used in conjunction with learning outcomes include:

- projects
- reports/themes
- narrative job descriptions
- significant learning experience reports
- logs
- seminar discussion groups

Reports, themes, and projects can be individualized to treat the concerns of the student, the employer, or the content of the student's program. These writing exercises provide opportunities to relate field learning and classroom learning, to test classroom theory, or to develop projects or studies beneficial to the employing firm or agency.

A narrative job description allows the student to discuss the circumstances, nature, and responsibilities of the work position in an informal, first-person form. The duties of the job, the source of job satisfaciton and dissatisfaction, and the challenges, the sources of conflict are properly addressed in such a format.

A Significant Learning Experience is an event involving human beings in which the purposes of the behavior are clear to the observer and the consequences are sufficiently definite so as to leave little doubt concerning its effect. The student makes inferences about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the behavior according to some standard (such as a principle or theory learned in the classroom). The Significant Learning Experience is recorded on a simple form which describes the event, its repercussions, and a judgment as to the effectiveness of the act. This technique causes the student to be more discerning about the dynamics of the work setting as it relates to productivity. For example, one student described a work situation where the supervisor exhibited considerable sternness with a co-worker. The employee was humiliated, resulting in considerable tension in the office and diminished morale. The supervisor's managerial approach was judged ineffective by the student.

A log, the most personal form of written learning exercise, is a continuous, free-form commentary on the learning experience. Ideally, it reveals the student's insights into those unique results that were not specified among the learning outcomes. Like a diary, the log requires regular reflection by the student throughout the experience.

Another extremely valuable approach is a seminar or group discussion which brings together students during their experiential term to discuss what they have done - learning that has resulted from the experience, for example - and to share experiences. These gatherings often produce a support group and a sense of community, because this medium stimulates new insight as well as new learning about the importance of community.

Curricular Status. Because experiential learning is a valid component of the curriculum, it is given degree credit and is shown

in the catalog and in curriculum guides as an integral part of each program of study. This permits substantial numbers of students to participate in the program. Our catalog reads: "The student may earn cooperative education credits or take on-campus courses to fulfill a particular requirement." Presenting it in this way establishes the importance of the offering, yet provides an escape hatch should a student benefit more directly from on-campus study or should there be no appropriate experience available.

What Is Cooperative Education?

Cooperative Education at Sinclair Community College is a college-level individualized program that provides students with an opportunity to apply classroom learning in a work situation.

The role of Cooperative Education is:

1) to integrate classroom learning with a well-planned and supervised work experience
2) to provide career orientation and guidance experiences
3) to provide expanded learning experiences related to chosen career goals
4) to gain work experiences related to chosen career goals
5) to explore career opportunities

Why Cooperative Education?

"You are well qualified but we want someone with experience." This statement is repeated many times to persons seeking employment after completing a college program. The Co-op program provides students with an opportunity to get the experience.

What Are the Three Co-op Plans?

A student desiring credit for work has three options available:

1) the Parallel Plan allows the student to work part-time and attend classes on a daily basis
2) the Alternate Plan allows a student to work full-time in an educationally related work situation
3) the Extended Work Experience Plan is designed for the student who works full time and is enrolled in part-time study.

credit for lifelong learning

Learning is more individual than we have thought, more varied in its expression and occasion, more evenly spaced along a person's life. An hour's reflection will reveal that each of us learned the most useful, loveliest things he knows outside school. Life, libraries and labs are potent teachers that leave school and college far behind.

Ronald Gross, 1973

How Do Students Acquire a Co-op Position?

If they are SCC students working at a job related to their career goals, they may already qualify for Co-op credit. If they are not working, and qualify for the Co-op program, the college will assist them in locating appropriate work situations.

How Much Credit is Available?

Each student shall have the opportunity to substitute 6-12 relevant cooperative work experience credit hours toward his/her degree. The relevance of the credits will be determined by the Division Dean and Department Chairperson involved, on an individual basis.

Cooperative Education Services

A combination of services are available through the Co-op Office. The Co-op Office can help students:

1) develop learning objectives
2) find work situations related to career goals
3) relate present work situation to Cooperative Education
4) learn about careers and employer expectations
5) explore projected work opportunities
6) prepare resumes
7) improve interviewing skills
8) relate Co-op experiences to classroom instruction

Credit for Lifelong Learning Program at Sinclair

Sinclair Community College recognizes two critical challenges to its institutional services. The first involves the adult student's all-too-frequently diminished self-confidence as a learner, resulting from the so-called learning stereotype or myth*, i.e., that one is not "learned" or "competent" unless a considerable amount of time is spent in traditional campus study.

The second challenge has to do with the general insensitivity of educators to the possibilities for non-classroom learning, e.g., experiential learning from work, self-directed reading, volunteering, conference or workshop participation, or travel. Accordingly, Sinclair's Credit for Lifelong Learning Program developed as a means of surmounting these barriers faced by older non-traditional adult learners.

The most important feature of the Credit for Lifelong Learning Program is Sinclair Community College's Portfolio Development Course, through which students first develop future career and educational plans and then describe and document prior, experientially acquired learning.

Credit for prior learning can be awarded only by one of Sinclair Community College's teaching faculty, of which 150 participate in the Credit for Lifelong Learning Program. If the learning has direct linkage to an existing course (e.g., marketing competency to some existing marketing course), direct course credit may be granted. If the learning is not closely allied to an existing course, but is nonetheless significant, internship credit, which may also count toward degree requirements, may be granted. Both judgments are the province of departmentally approved teaching faculty, trained as faculty evaluators. At Sinclair credit may be awarded only for college equivalent learning, not for experience alone.

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* See Allen Tough's 1978 Ontario Institute Study on adult learning.

Recognizing prior experiential learning with internship credit is used when no course equivalent to a student's experiential learning is offered at SCC. For example, a student seeks credit for skill and learning acquired as a teacher's aide. The educational outcomes of the courses offered by SCC in Early Childhood Education are not necessarily similar to the skills and knowledge that the student has identified and demonstrated from prior experiential learning. If the student can show that this learning has important linkage tothe discipline, an internship faculty evaluator performs the evaluation. This learning may be evaluated in light of comparable learning of students in ECE Internships serving as teachers' aides.

The steps in the portfolio development process are:

1) the student enrolls in Portfolio Development I, EBE 100, for 3 credit hours. Participation is conditional upon preliminary evidence of prior learning, the ability to write clearly and concisely, and the payment of tuition for "Portfolio Development" and an administrative surcharge. Upon acceptance by a member of the College's Experience Based Education staff, the student is assigned to a portfolio facilitator who assists in all phases of the Credit for Lifelong Learning Program;

2) the student clarifies educational, career, and personal objectives in the light of past growth/experiences and developes a short chronological record of experiences;

3) with the assistnace of the portfolio facilitator, the student specifies the college level learning acquired through non-classroom sources, as it relates to learning outcomes linked to traditional courses which are provided in the Learning Resources Center, or to Internships;

4) the student documents the college level learning claimed;

5) the student completes the portfolio which includes a statement of educational, career, and personal objectives, a chronological record, a clarification of experiences and related learning, and supportive documentation. The portfolio shows how the learning cited is related to particular

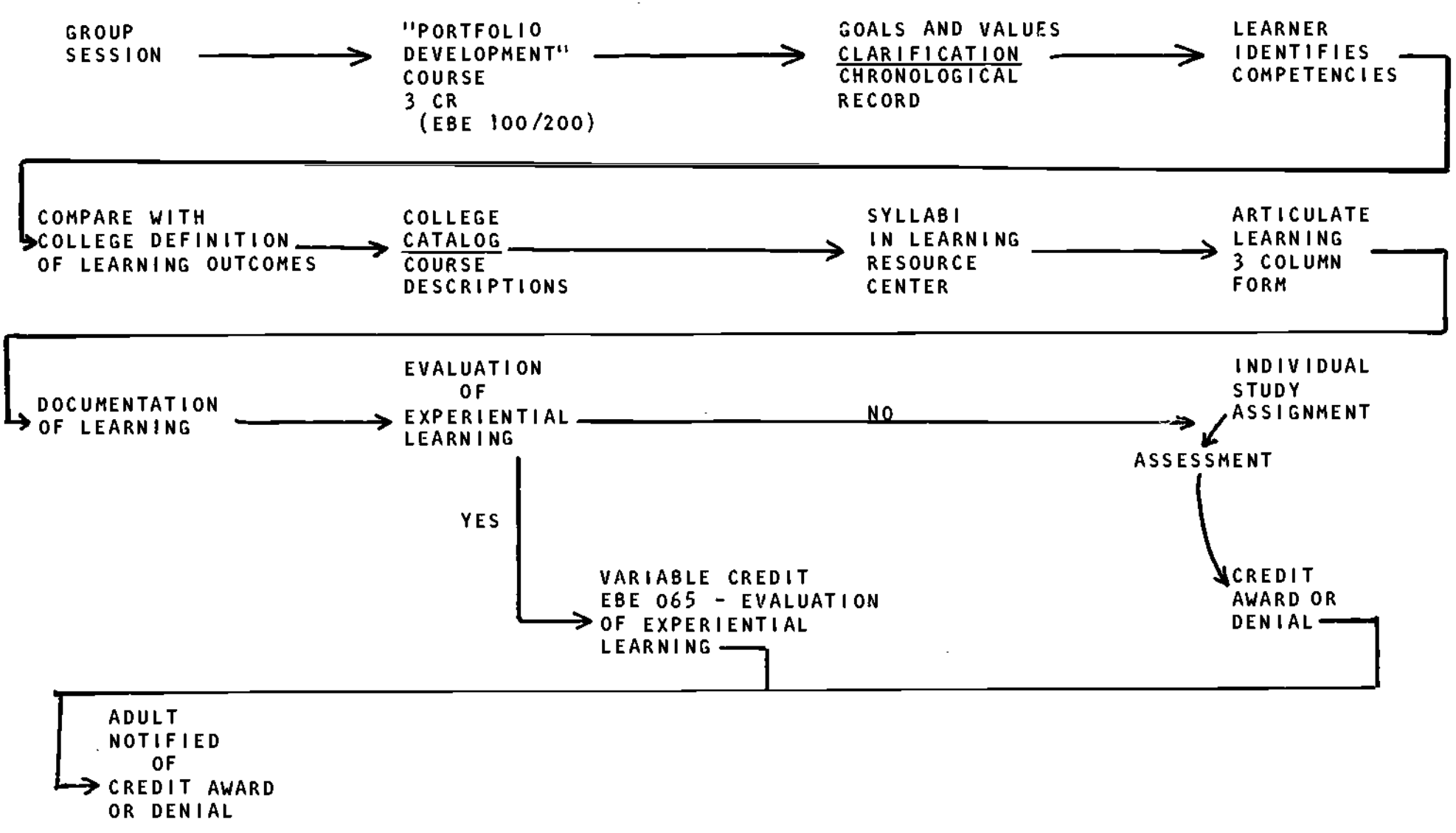
courses or competencies. The student's request for credit hours commensurate with learning also is included;

6) the portfolio is evaluated by a committee for quality control, and then departmentally approved teaching faculty evaluate* the student for field credit or direct course credit; and, finally

7) the student is awarded credit commensurate with learning.

* Faculty evaluators use a variety of approaches in the evaluation of prior learning, including performance assessments, on-site evaluations, product assessments, paper-and-pencil tests, and simulations; all evaluations include review of the portfolio and related documentation, and verbal testing of the student.

PROCESS FOR EVALUATING LIFELONG LEARNING OF ADULTS FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT AT SINCLAIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE



The Greater Dayton Consortium for Lifelong Learners

The Greater Dayton Consortium for Lifelong Learners (GDCLL) is an idea perfectly suited to our current interest in serving adult students. The Consortium combines the academic value of assessing and crediting prior learning through portfolio development with the convenience of offering the program at various business, government, and human service agencies where Dayton adults work and can gather for classes. Off-campus delivery of the program, on site of Greater Dayton Consortium for Lifelong Learners members, is a vital feature of the program.

Specifically, the GDCLL involves Sinclair Community College's Credit for Lifelong Learning Program, the brokerage and advising services of the Educational Opportunity Center, and a variety of public and private organizations committed to providing a convenient time and place for delivery of the services to constituents of member agencies.

Portfolio classes are taught in the manner described for the Credit for Lifelong Learning Program. However, after the portfolio is complete, the Educational Opportunity Center provides information about institutions and/or programs which can further the student's education and career goals. Through the process, the program seeks the following outcomes:

1) to affirm students as learners (to recognize the value of experientially acquired competence);

2) to recognize college-equivalent learning with degree credit via a non-traditional evaluation process (Portfolio Evaluation, Sinclair Community College);

3) to advise students as to their educational alternatives, building upon learning demonstrated in the portfolio (advising and brokering, Educational Opportunity Center);

4) to encourage life/career planning as an integral aspect of the process of affirming, evaluating, and advising; and

5) to enable participants to view themselves as "successful" learners as a result of working on the portfolio.

Pages 20 - 22 contained copyrighted materials and have therefore been deleted. The deleted pages were a reproduction of "Experience Can Count for a Lot at Sinclair Community College," by Brenda Kruéger. The article was published in Community and Junior College Journal, v48 n5 February 1978.

. . . to increase learning opportunities means
to facilitate communication between the
learner and his world, between the learner and
his fellows, between the learner and those
who can point him towards traditions and
methods tested by their experience . . .
multiplying the roads, bridges and windows
to learning opportunities . . .

I. Illich, 1971

college without walls

COLLEGE WITHOUT WALLS PROGRAM AT SINCLAIR

As its name implies, the College Without Walls is not composed of bricks and mortar or glass and steel. It is not just a program thal allows students to combine existing campus courses in unique ways. Neither is it a form of cooperative education, with traditional courses and credit hours supplemented by field work. It embodies all the elements of experiential learning, and more. Unlike most institutionally based innovation, CWW goes beyond moderate departure from standard operating procedure. As Mark Roseman points out:

> Such innovation reflects nothing more than modifications in the "delivery system" (if I may be permitted the editorial efficiency of that term without political support for it) for the established institutionalized view of higher education. This is true of most "external degree" programs, the major category or classification for such institutionally based innovation. Thus, it is usually not fundamental change in the nature of the higher educational process or goals which is sought from such alternatives, it's simply different ways of "delivering" it . . . The UWW, on the other hand, represents innovation on a much more significant level than alternative "delivery systems." It challenges most of the basic concepts which undergird both the form and the content of higher education in this nation." (1975, p. 15)

The College Without Walls program at Sinclair Community College emanates from a concern about:

1) student learning - which some educators have arbitrarily defined as occurring only inside the four walls of a college campus after "X" hours of lecturing
2) the depersonalization of education resulting from rapid growth and impersonal, bureaucratic organization
3) the inability of mass education to continuously stimulate the uniqueness of each student
4) the traditional preoccupation with the dissemination of information in classrooms rather than the learning of students
5) the imposition of external controls rather than the nurturing of internal, student-conceived patterns of growth and development
6) the inflexibility of higher education which, out of an understandable desire to provide uniform excellence, has in truth provided uniform definitions for: the period of

learning (semesters, quarters); the place (classrooms); the method (sitting passively, writing, and listening to lectures); and the curriculum (sequences of required courses with limited student options)

7) an inordinate stress on data storage and retrieval - or in some curricula on psychomotor skills - at the expense of that vital interpersonal learning so crucial to personal and career success

8) the regimentation and passiveness imposed on students to the exclusion of active, participative, experiential learning (that is, the notion of the community as a laboratory for learning)

So the development of self-directed persons, able to think and feel and create, is the purpose of Sinclair's CWW program. Its commitment is to the full cognitive and affective growth of its students.

What does the Sinclair College Without Walls program make possible for students?

> It seeks to build highly individualized and flexible programs of learning and makes use of new and largely untapped resources for teaching and learning. It moves toward a new faith in the student and his capacity for learning on his own, while at the same time providing close and continuing contact between the student and teacher. It redefines the role of the teacher as a facilitator and co-participant in the planning and design of the student's learning experience . . . (Baskin, 1972)

The nurturing of a self-directed learner is the thrust. The process begins with a careful screening of applicants to determine agreement of learning style with program demands. The primary criterion for admission is a high degree of self-direction. Crucial to the process is the creation of the student resource group and the preparation of learning contracts.

Under Sinclair Community College's College Without Walls program, it is intended that learning be a dynamic process, with the learner exercising a major responsibility for the learning process. The following are the basic parameters of the CWW program:

1) a fluid concept of time, allowing the student to progress at his or her own rate

2) a variety of potential locations for learning - in the home, at work, in the community, in service to others, or in other area educational and/or learning resource locations

3) less passive and highly participative, experientially based process

4) a full concern for the student's affective as well as cognitive development

5) a diversity of student participants

6) a variety of assessment possibilities including on-site assessment, student reflection papers, simulations, role-playing and, especially important, the College's Credit for Lifelong Learning process (in addition to traditional paper-and-pencil techniques)

7) a breadth of resources beyond the College, including expert opinions of community practitioners, area university and college instruction, city-wide learning resources (print and electronic media), field experiences in community agencies and institutions, traditional texts and reading, and audio-visual materials and modules available through the Dayton/Miami Valley Consortium of Colleges and Universities

8) a more personal, narrative evaluation of all major learning exercises

9) a new role stressing a <u>self-directed, proactive learning style</u>

The important difference between traditional study and CWW study is suggested in the following adaptation from Dr. John Bear's <u>A Comprehensive Guide to Alternative Degree Programs</u>:

TRADITIONAL DEGREE	THE COLLEGE WITHOUT WALLS
Awards degrees on the basis of time served, credits earned.	Awards degrees on the basis of demonstrated competence and skills attained.
Requirements for degree based on medieval principles: some general education, some specialization.	Requirements for degree agreed upon by student and faculty members; aimed at helping student achieve his/her career or personal goals.
Degree awarded when student meets certain numerical requirements.	Degree awarded when student's actual competence reaches agreed-upon levels.
Considers the classroom as the primary locus of instruction and the campus as the center of learning.	Sees the campus as a somewhat specialized, detached segment of the world. Any part of the world may be appropriate for certain kinds of learning.
Learning resources viewed almost exclusively as printed material and professional educators.	The range of learning resources is virtually infinite, and certainly includes involvement with the physical and social world.
Faculty members must have appropriate degrees.	Competence and personal qualities of faculty members far more important than their degrees.
Faculty member sees self primarily as transmitter of information and knowledge.	Faculty member sees self primarily as a counselor and an expediter of learning.
Testing, awarding of credits and degrees depend almost exclusively on mastery of course content.	Learning how to learn and affective learning are as important as cognitive learning for full development of individual.
Cultivates dependence on authority through prescribed curricula, required campus residence, compulsory class attendance.	Cultivates self-direction and autonomy through planned independent study, on and off campus.
Curricula predominantly oriented toward traditional disciplines and well-established professors.	Student's program, reflecting his/her needs and goals, is likely to be problem-oriented, issue-oriented, world-oriented.

Description and documentation of prior experiential learning is the initial phase. The sponsored learning portion of the program consists of a series of learning contracts which describe competencies or learning outcomes, learning activities in support of these outcomes, and mechanisms for evaluating the learning. Both prior learning and sponsored learning are evaluated by subject matter specialists (i.e., Faculty Evaluators, Faculty Mentors).

Formation of the Student Resource Group. With the assistance of the Core Faculty person, the student forms his/her resource group consisting of five persons: the student; the Core Faculty, a College Without Walls student peer; and two Community Resource Faculty. The purpose of the Resource Group is multi-faceted: to guide the student's overall program of study, to act as a support group for the student, and to provide a quality control mechanism and overall assessment of the student's performance. The peer is nominated by the student. The community faculty are local persons expert in several or more of the student's primary competency areas and are also nominated by the student. These persons need not be academicians and, in fact, the student is encouraged to consider knowledgeable practitioners in the field. The primary criterion of the selection of Community Resource Faculty is their expertise and willingness to help the student in his/her learning activities.

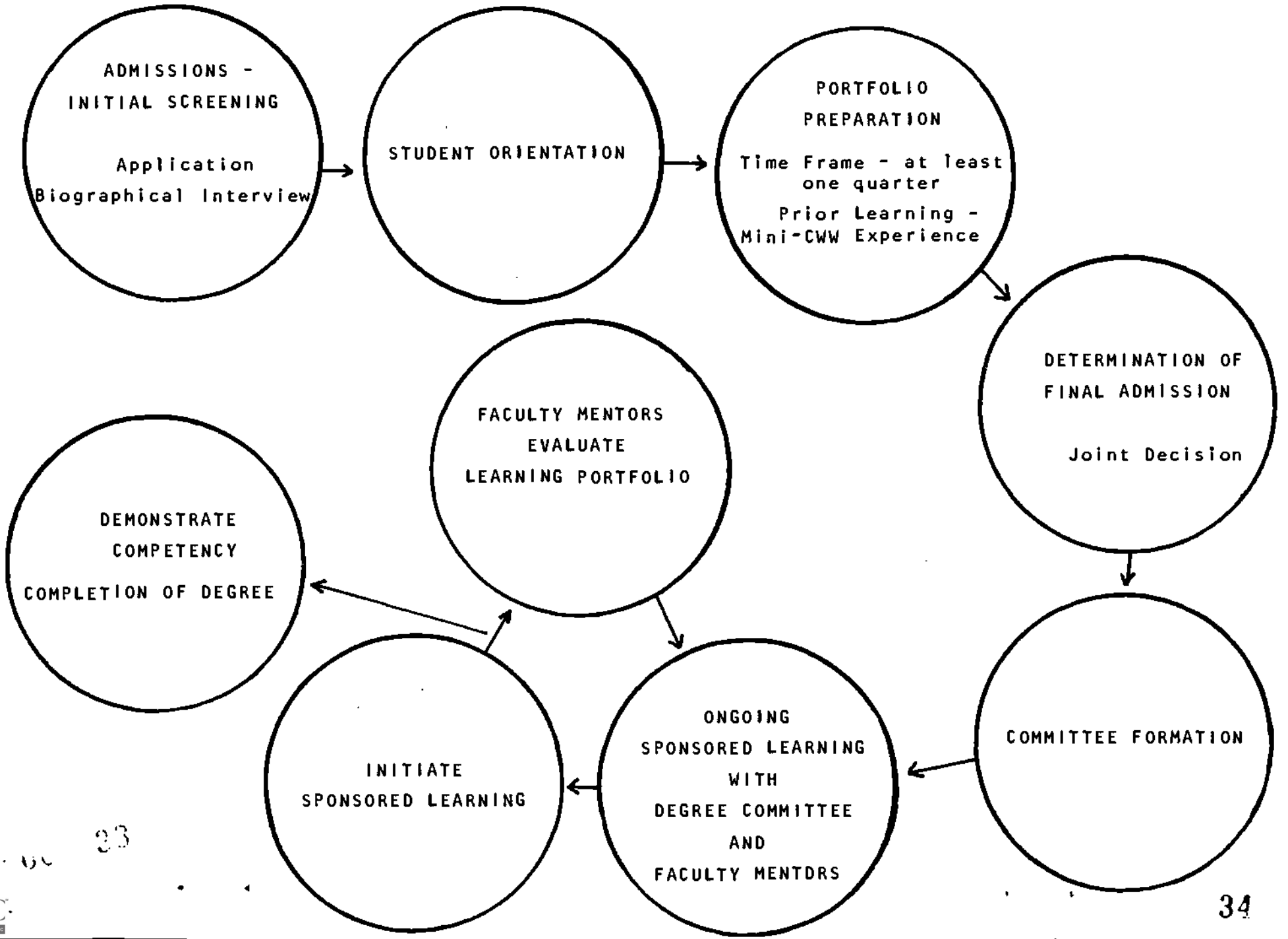
The CWW Learning Contract. Each Learning Contract serves as a written agreement among the student, the Core Faculty, and the Mentor, that certain future learning activities will take place in some time frame. A Contract develops out of the collaboration among student, Core Faculty, and Mentor. Learning Contracts specify: 1) what is to be learned; 2) how the learning will take place; and 3) how that learning will be evaluated and by whom. Thus, it is a highly individualized product which helps ensure a more personalized education program for the student.

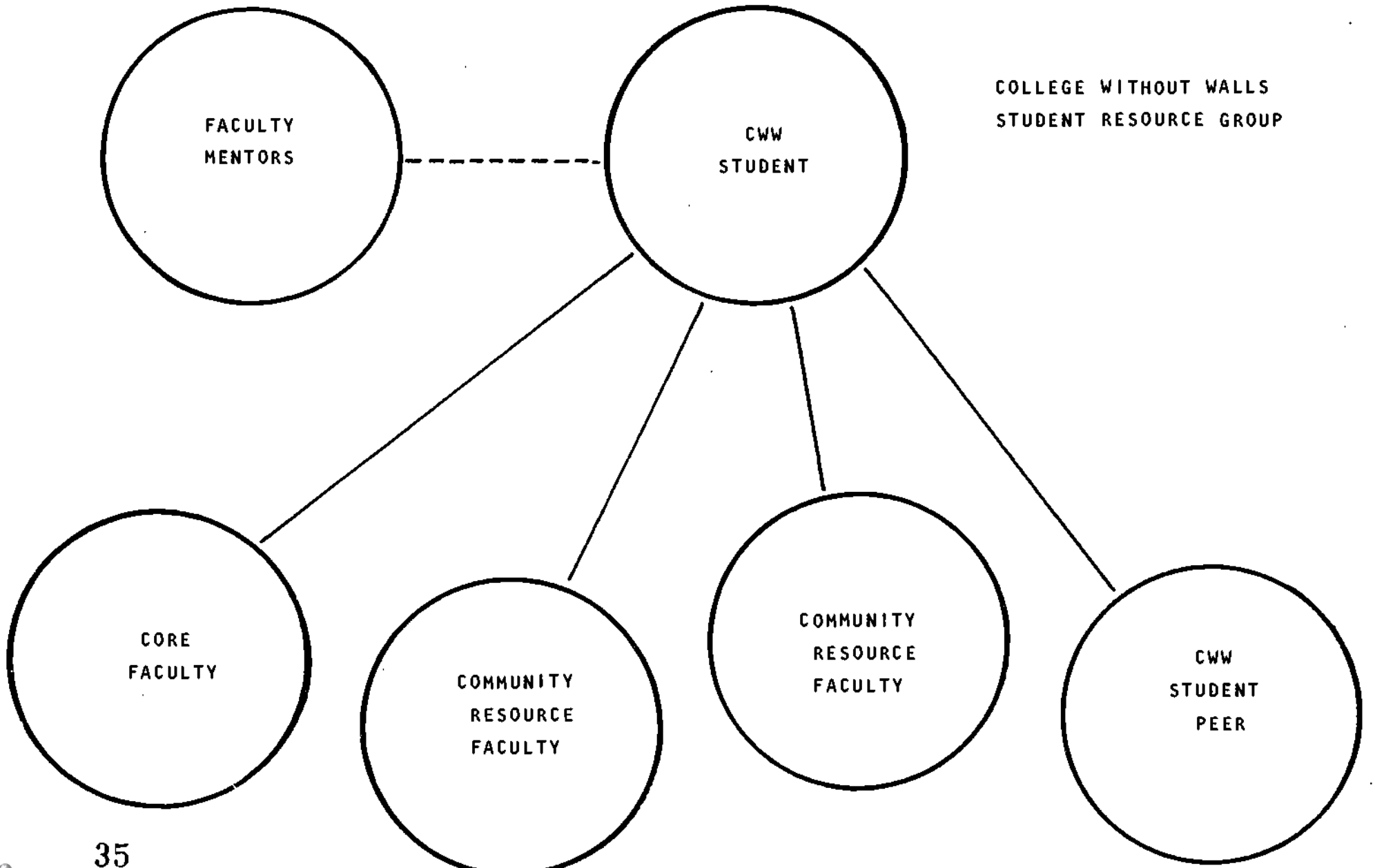
Evaluation. A basic premise of the Sinclair College Without Walls program is that all learning occurring prior to entry in the program which has linkage to program competencies should be recognized. To that end, all prior learning and documentation of that

learning is assembled in the portfolio. Evaluation of prior learning influences the determination of sponsored learning exercises.

Evaluation of sponsored learning focuses on all on-going learning exercises and learning outcomes connected to program competencies. The verbalization as well as written expression (i.e., paper-and-pencil essay tests) of learning is requested from time to time to ascertain learning. A significant level of emphasis is placed on evidence of activities performed, accomplishments, or actual products of the activity. Additional evaluative mechanisms may include simulations, role-playing, on-site evaluation, projects, term papers, employer reports, recorded interviews, and/or photographic essays.

THE CWW PROCESS




FACULTY
MENTORS
CWW
STUDENT
COLLEGE WITHOUT WALLS
STUDENT RESOURCE GROUP
CORE
FACULTY
COMMUNITY
RESOURCE
FACULTY
COMMUNITY
RESOURCE
FACULTY
CWW
STUDENT
PEER

THOUGHTS ON INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

There are in this country a few colleges, fewer than you can count on the fingers of one hand, that were designed from their inception as alternative and flexible programs for adult learners. Empire State College and the Community College of Vermont are examples. The kind of flexible time/space programs, so compatible with the life/career/learning patterns of adults, which these colleges celebrate, are not part of the post-secondary mainstream. That is a pity.

Moreover, there will likely be few new colleges like these committed to flexible, alternative programming for adults. The whirlwind days of the 1960's, when for a period of time one new two-year college was created every week of the year, will not be characteristic of the 1980's. The possibilities for radically new colleges featuring new delivery services which recognize the prior learning of adult learners, integrating community resources with college resources, and providing individualized learning experiences, external to the classroom, is extremely remote.

The best hope for adult learners is that existing colleges might creatively redefine and restructure their resources and delivery capabilities. It's going to be hard work, but absolutely essential work. And, let's face it, most adult learners (see Tough, 1978) do not find our institutions comfortable places in which to learn, respectful of their uniqueness and autonomy.

Those institutions which continue to serve adult learners in the 1980's with 1960 educational delivery will be of decreasing utility to their communities. The 1970's preoccupation with new programs of study must in the 1980's give way to new ways to learn - highly individualized, experiential, community-based learning that makes sense to adults and possesses an integrity superior to passive, abstract classroom exercises.

But institutional change is tricky business. The struggle will be to carefully conceive strategies which causes institutional transformation. At Sinclair Community College, some 150 traditional teaching faculty persons participate in evaluating

the prior learning of adult persons and negotiating individualized study experiences for 3,000-4,000 registrations annually. Achieving such a re-orientation is not an exercise in black magic; it involves careful and thorough consideration of a half-dozen fundamental considerations.

Test yourself. See if your institution has given adequate attention to the factors elaborated on in the following pages:

1) lifelong learning institutional mission
2) administrative commitment to lifelong learning
3) organizational design for lifelong learners
4) redefinition of faculty roles and fiscal underpinnings
5) program development
6) institutional acceptance

1) Institutional mission. Check your mission statement. If there isn't commitment to serving lifelong learners with alternative, flexible, and experiential components, then stop dead in your tracks. Goals and objectives ought to flow out of institutional mission. If lifelong learners go unnoticed, work hard at "consciousness raising" about the reality of the times, changing demographics, and adult learning (e.g., that most adults learn best independently, and that they often bring college-equivalent learning from prior experience to their college enrollment, etc.).

2) Administrative commitment. Faculty often comment, "We understand the need to re-think and re-design our offerings for adults, but administration doesn't provide the resources (or, take your pick: remuneration, release time, leadership) to make it possible." In some cases the "blame" is accurately placed; in others there is support, but faculty don't "own" their responsibility to move forward. One thing is clear: if there isn't support from the top administrative officer through middle-level program managers, then very little is going to get done. Structural and fiscal changes are strategic, and faculty in most institutions are powerless to impact on their systems. Venture capital is an essential notion to instituting the kinds of changes necessary to begin meeting the needs of lifelong learners, and that kind of investment hinges on administrative action.

3) Organizational design. Experience shows organizational considerations are pivotal to the kind of reorientation and reallocation of resources that adult learners deserve. There are essentially three organizational patterns for serving up flexible and alternative lifelong learning programs:

a) the free-standing organization

b) the traditional organization with adjunct service capability

c) the traditional organization with integrated service capability

The allusion has been made to the free-standing organizational arrangement, wherein a college diverts all of its resources to non-traditional learning services. Empire State College at the four-year level and Community College of Vermont at the two-year level are excellent examples. The improbability of more new institutions of this sort has already been noted.

A more common practice at the four-year level (less so among two-year colleges) is the creation of a unique organizational component as an adjunct to the existing departmental and divisional structures. The University of Alabama's New College, Depaul University's School for New Learning, or a number of University Without Walls programs housed in existing universities serve as models of this kind of organization.

Frequently these programs staff their own faculty, create their own curriculum, and award their own degree. This kind of organizational arrangement serves to circumvent traditional faculty resistances, allowing what is essentially a two-track system. Traditional teaching faculty are not bothered with the new students or the new techniques, maintaining the purity of their classroom-based lecture and testing modes, side-stepping the tension of new roles. The non-traditional component of the college has the flexibility of staffing persons committed to educational reform and skillful in individualized and experiential education for adults.

A third possibility is the integration of flexible lifelong learning services throughout the institution. In this model traditional departments and teaching faculty take on roles as faculty

evaluators of prior experiential learning, as faculty mentors of special individualized learning projects, or as core faculty who serve in an advocacy role, assisting lifelong learners in degree planning and learning contract development. Non-traditional educational delivery becomes the province of all departments avoiding sensitive "turf" issues. Sinclair Community College, of course, is an example of such an organizational arrangement.

While the free-standing and adjunct models have compelling advantages, at Sinclair the integrated model offers the greatest prospect for institutionalizing lifelong learners, and for maintaining quality assurance (i.e., the same faculty who insure standards for conventional instruction are responsible for quality control of unconventional, non-classroom learning).

4) Redefinition of faculty roles and fiscal underpinnings. Regardless of organizational arrangement there is an optimum relationship of centralized and decentralized services. In the integrated model traditional teaching fauclty have full authority for evaluating learning and awarding credits and grades. This authority is appropriately decentralized to departmental levels. However, there is considerable merit in a centralized office which accesses students, develops instructional materials, conducts in-service training, oversees the logistics and paperwork flows (a task of considerable dimension in programs serving large numbers of adults engaged in individualized study), accounts for reimbursement, and links students and faculty persons together in consideration of prior learning portfolios, learning contracts, or other independent activities.

The distinction between centralization and decentralization of authority serves also to differentiate line and staff relationships. In the integrated model line authority, or the authority to control the delivery of instruction, is in the hands of existing departments and faculty. Staff authority is entrusted in the central office, whose sole function is to support, advise, and serve deans, departmental heads, and on-line faculty. This office acts as a catalyst and energizer for the College's non-traditional offerings, but the academic considerations are always teaching faculty responsibility.

Serving lifelong learners with individualized, experiential, and flexible learning options necessitates the institution's re-thinking of faculty roles. Faculty need to be unshackled from traditional position definitions to accomplish the kind of personalized services suggested in this edition. Two primary roles for serving adult learners need to be provided: evaluator roles to ascertain the extent and college-equivalency of prior experiential learning, and mentor roles to support and guide the student in the process of planning individualized learning experiences supportive of learning goals. There are other roles: core faculty roles and portfolio development faculty roles (wherein faculty provide advocacy and assistance in the development of learning contracts or portfolios of prior learning).

Can all of this individualization be cost-effective? In a word, yes, it can be entirely cost-effective. Not only are there significantly larger numbers of adults who respond to opportunities to move at their own pace, exercising a major role in the design of their learning experiences, but the cost-revenue relationships can be adjusted in such a way as to underwrite all of the costs incurred. (For example, colleges with 20-to-1 FTE ratios for traditional three-credit courses frequently accept ratios of 12- or 15-to-1 for seminars or advanced courses. Accordingly, independent student-faculty arrangements which reimburse faculty at 1/5th of a pay hour per student in a three-credit enrollment maintains the same cost-revenue relationships of a seminar.)

Role redefinition and revisions in compensation go hand-in-hand. Too often the latter does not accompany the former, limiting faculty participation of any significant number. The willingness to take on new faculty roles is much more a function of perceived social and ego threats than economic factors, in general. The entire consideration of achieving institutional acceptance will be briefly considered after examining program development variables.

5) Program development variables. Providing flexible, experiential programs for adult learners requires curriculum and institutional development. These alternatives require a fair amount of sophistication to put in place, necessitating an astute program developer, familiar with adult learning theory and experiential

education. This expertise is typically not available in most institutions.

Fortunately there is a way that an ambitious faculty person or administrator committed to serving lifelong learners can develop the necessary competence. The Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL) represents the greatest technical capability in the arena of lifelong learning. Their extensive resources, inclusive of circuit-riding consultants and the best literature on lifelong and experiential learning, is readily available to its institutional members. Affiliation with CAEL is a desirable first step in the development of new options for adults.

This technical competence can be nurtured through visitation to exemplary programs, and there are numerous skillful consultants who can assist in developing these skills (CAEL is an excellent referral for such persons).

The Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) and Title I, administered through state 1202 Commissions, are encouraging of flexible time/space programs for lifelong learners. Some institutions will want to apply for Federal assistance or for endowment support in order to underwrite development as well as initial implementation.

Curriculum and instructional development should focus on: careful descriptions of educational processes; faculty and student guides and handbooks; standards for valid and reliable assessment; definitions for college-equivalent learning in participating curricular areas; quality assurance safeguards; and materials to undergird the process (e.g., portfolio models for articulating and documenting prior learning or learning contracts for clarifying outcomes, experiences, and evaluation of sponsored non-classroom learning exercises). This developmental phase is crucial and, without question, the literature published by CAEL represents the best thinking on lifelong education.

6) Achieving institutional acceptance. All of the preceding is to no avail without a thorough consideration of "change strategy." It should be an overriding concern. Too many institutions have

developed elaborate and thoughtfully conceived programs for assessing experiential learning of lifelong learners, only to find crippling faculty resistance.

The problem? Experience has shown that some program planners are inclined to impose their designs, concentrating staff development efforts on knowledge and skill development of faculty without concern for attitudes. Faculty have very deep-seated notions about the circumstances and locations of learning. To simply decree new roles, in most institutions, is to insure resentment and resistance. Attitudes of faculty must first be modulated. They need to be acquainted with exemplary programs, adult learning patterns, and rationale for non-classroom and alternative learning options for adults.

The most successful staff development seems to move from attitudes to knowledge and skill development. The targets of change strategy should include all of the key constituencies of the college in addition to: faculty, students, administrators, trustees, advisory committees, education policy committees, state controlling boards, and community groups and officials. The approaches to change should vary with each group. Advisory committees have been exceedingly supportive of experiential programs. Many of these persons were experientially trained and value work experience as a means of developing competence. Don't forget state controlling boards, as new credit mechanisms without classroom linkages are quite new to them, and the compelling educational benefits of such programs need to be carefully documented for them.

A pivotal consideration to the whole notion of achieving institutional acceptance is the person selected as "change agent." The person must be interpersonally effective and sensitive to the educational issues involved. Ideally this person would be currently on the staff, enjoying the trust and acceptance of a breadth of faculty and administrative staff. An evangelistic commitment to educational reform, coupled with a high energy level, are aspects of the profile. Management and fiscal skills are invaluable in implementation phases. A rare person? Yes, but if such a program is to be successfully launched it will require the appointment of a person skillful in these regards.

Participation of a cross-section of staff is essential. A non-participating approach is potentially destructive to the full acceptance of the alternatives alluded to in these pages. An excellent approach is the appointment of a task group to investigate and study institutional options. Again, the change agent or program manager will need to give primary initiative to evolving policy and developing in-service materials and program resources for the Committee's consideration.

In conclusion, developing institutional competence in serving lifelong learners is best learned experientially. Faculty will experience the reward of overseeing experiential projects of assessing adults experientially trained, administrators will come to appreciate its contribution to adult learning and the new student clientele it will reach, and the community will be enriched by a college purveying new and viable services to its constituents.

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